



**Appropriations Committee Public Hearing
February 17, 2017**

Department of Housing Budget

Testimony of Florence Villano, Executive Director

Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker, and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you this evening. My name is Florence Villano, Executive Director of the Connecticut Housing Coalition. The Connecticut Housing Coalition represents a wide-ranging, vibrant network of community-based affordable housing activity across the state. Our more than 250 member organizations include nonprofit developers, human service agencies, resident associations, and diverse other housing practitioners and advocates. Founded in 1981, the Coalition's mission is to expand housing opportunity and to increase the quantity and quality of affordable housing throughout Connecticut.

I wish to speak this evening in support of the Department of Housing (DOH) Budget. The Coalition enjoys a positive working relationship with the Department, the staff is both knowledgeable and responsive to the affordable housing needs of the state. DOH has been critical to the production of affordable housing in our state. Since its inception in 2011 over 10,000 units of housing have been built, and over 90 percent of those units are affordable. The issue of affordable housing in our state was ignored for too long, and as a result, Connecticut has had to work hard to overcome the lack of affordable units and DOH again is critical to that effort.

The Department is also an integral part of the progress being made to end homelessness, improving the lives of so many and, at the same time, saving public funding. The Connecticut Housing Coalition is proud to be a part of that undertaking and we can testify to the hard work and dedication the Department has shown in that effort.

We are deeply appreciative of both the Governor's and the Legislature's continued crucial support of housing, understanding that housing is a critical and basic need, and that all Connecticut residents deserve to live in decent, safe and affordable housing. We

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are keenly aware of the difficulties and hard choices you are faced with as you deliberate on the budget. We are here tonight to speak in support of the current budget proposal. It provides crucial funding for all of DOH's efforts to address the critical housing needs of Connecticut's residents. At this time, in light of the changes in Washington and the uncertainty surrounding federal funding it is even more important to maintain the Department's funding. Your sustained commitment to the DOH housing programs will continue to improve lives, improve communities and save money on health care and crisis interventions.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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